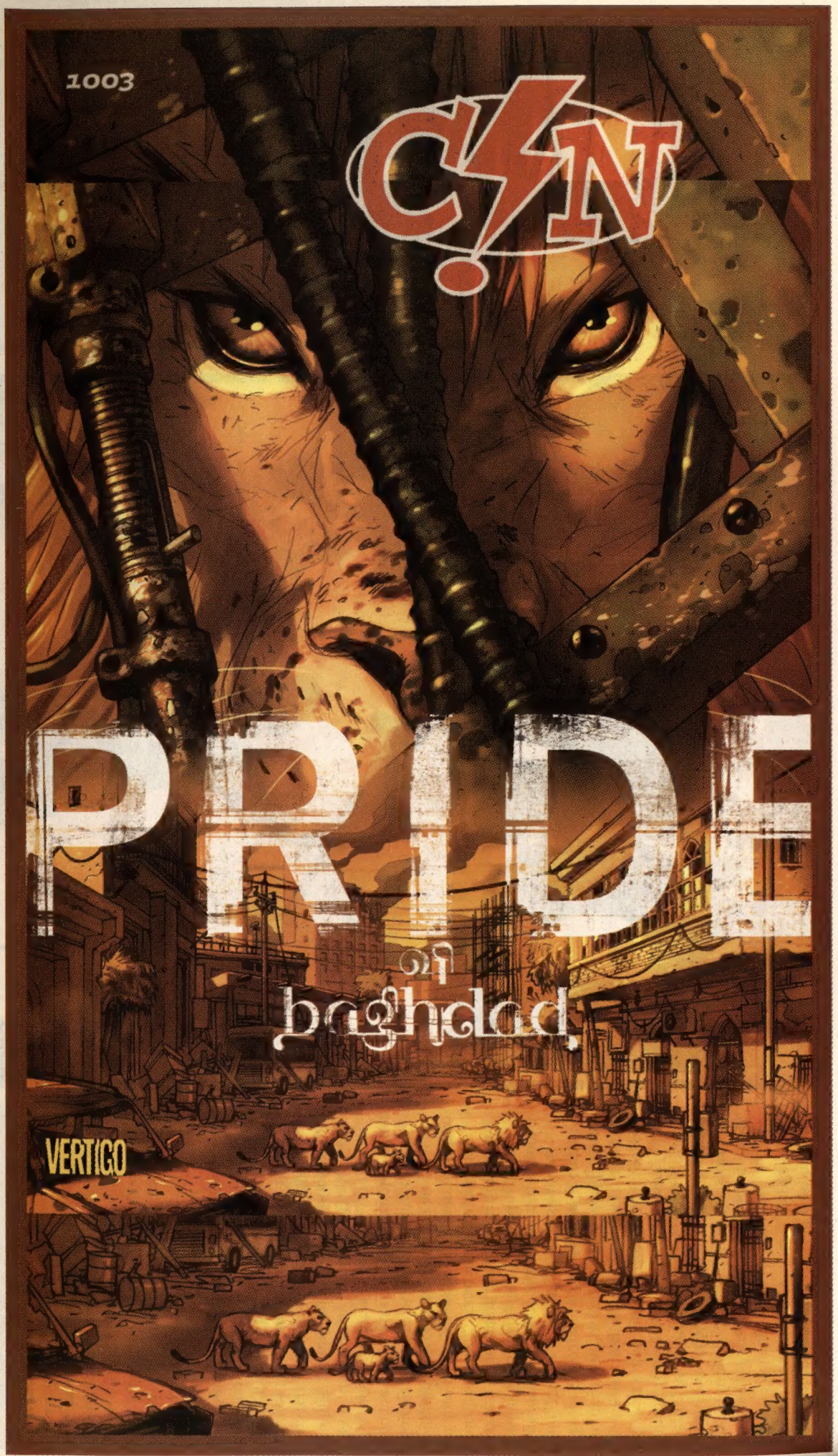
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Pride in the Name of Love

For millennia, storytellers have used animals as a tool to convey complex moral and ethical messages in an entertaining manner. So it's no surprise that acclaimed writer *Brian K. Vaughan* should call upon this longstanding literary tradition for his new graphic novel, ***Pride of Baghdad.*** What is surprising, though, is that the story—and the animals who are central to it—came to Vaughan through the news media, not through his imagination.

"Inspired by an unbelievable true tale of four lions who escaped a Baghdad Zoo during Operation Iraqi Freedom, ***Pride of Baghdad*** is half anthropomorphic adventure, half ***Animal Farm***-like parable about the ongoing conflict, and 100% lavishly illustrated by my brilliant co-creator, artist *Niko Henrichon*," Vaughan explained.

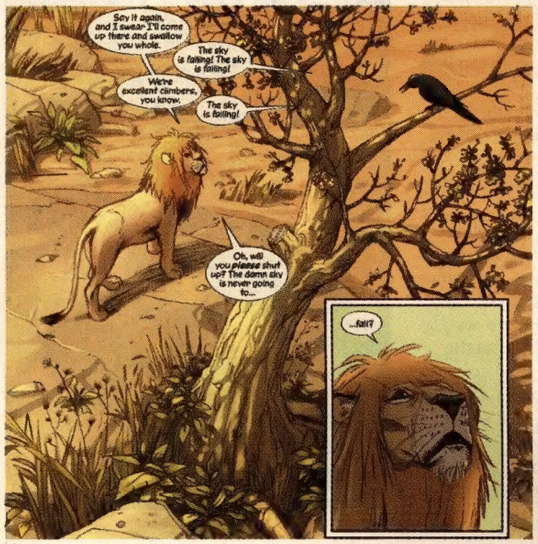
Mention comics and lions, and the first thing some people expect is ***Simba*** or ***The Lion King***. Are these anthropomorphic lions in a fantasy milieu, or are these real lions in a real world? "A bit of both, I suppose. Our protagonists are inspired by actual lions, but Niko and I are using dramatic license to look at the world through their eyes. So they're more realistic than Disney characters, but because we can also 'hear' their voices, they're obviously more expressive than lions in a ***National Geographic*** documentary."

What was it about this real-world story that made Vaughan think "This is perfect for a graphic novel"? "Comics have always had a pretty rich tradition of telling meaningful stories with anthropomorphized animals," Vaughan said. "I thought experimenting with that genre in a standalone graphic novel would be a good way to push myself, get away from my usual dumb pop-culture references and shocking cliffhangers.

"At the same time, I was also hungry to write something that addressed my conflicted feelings about the Iraq War. When I read reports of a pride of four lions escaping the Baghdad Zoo during the American bombings, everything just kind of fell into place."

Was a tale starring a pride of lions a challenge for Vaughan, who has been praised for his insightful—and very human—characterization in his comics work? "I guess I really didn't approach writing talking animals any differently than I approached writing talking machines in ***Ex Machina*** or teenage witches in ***Runaways*** or grumpy bioengineers in ***Y—The Last Man.*** You just imagine what the world looks like through their eyes, and then you sit in front of your keyboard and make up lies until they start to sound true."

From the ***Panchatantra*** to Aesop to ***Animal Farm,*** writers have used the stories of animals to present allegorical observations about human nature. So what's the bigger picture behind ***Pride of Baghdad?*** "Well, you can read this as just a fascinating adventure that happens to star animals, like ***Watership Down*** or ***Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH.*** And while I love those books, I was definitely more inspired by something like ***Animal Farm,*** which was a cool story when I first read it in fifth grade, but one that became much more than that as I reread it over the years.


Say it again, and I swear I'll come up there and swallow you whole.
The sky is falling! The sky is falling!
We're excellent climbers, you know.
The sky is falling!
Oh, will you please shut up? The damn sky is never going to...
...fall?

"***Pride of Baghdad is*** a parable, but it's not a preachy polemic where I try to shove my half-baked beliefs down readers' throats. I wrote this story not because I have all the answers, but because I wanted to ask myself hard questions about the Iraq War, the nature of occupation, and the price of freedom."

Should readers expect political commentary in this work, with its Baghdad setting and its backdrop of war? "Absolutely. With fiction, audiences can watch endless horrors inflicted on human beings, even children, but put a dog in danger, and watch people walk out in droves. Similarly, I think it's hard for even the most sympathetic person to truly feel for the civilian victims of foreign wars we see on TV—but strangely, many of us can somehow bridge that emotional gap when it comes to seeing innocent animals suffer. I wanted to write about war from the perspective of noncombatants, and because animals transcend race or creed or nationality, having them be our sole protagonists hopefully allowed us to tell a story that's universally relatable.

"Zill is the oldest male lion, a 'benevolent opportunist' who's willing to live under any kind of keeper, so long as he's fed on time. Noor is a reform-minded young lioness who wants to earn freedom from her cage, rather than be released by some outside force of nature. Safa is an older female lion who vividly remembers the dangers of the wild, and would happily trade a little freedom for security. And Ali is a young cub, one who's never known a life other than the zoo.

"Clearly, we're using all this as metaphor, and while other animals in the story are inspired by Saddam loyalists or looters or insurgents or religious extremists, because ***Pride of Baghdad*** is based on a true story, our graphic novel isn't a paint-by-numbers allegory where each character is a clear-cut stand-in for some facet of modern Iraq. There's a fair amount of ambiguity to the proceedings, like life."

Is Vaughan concerned that the political subtext of the book might be polarizing to its readership? "The book has a very political subtext, but I don't think it's necessarily polarizing. Again, I'm not trying to harangue anyone with my beliefs, just asking important questions about this war that conservatives, liberals, and everyone in between should be asking themselves.

"That said, I have no idea how people are going to respond. But I never think about my audience, I just write the stories I need to tell, and try to tell them to the best of my abilities. I hope lots of people will check it out and get something from reading it, but I only ever write for myself."

Does his story follow reality to its conclusion, or did Vaughan diverge from the real-world events for the end of his tale? "We *did* follow the story to its real-world conclusion, but I'd rather wait for readers who might not be familiar with this underreported story to discover it for themselves."

How realistic is this graphic novel? Did ***Pride of Baghdad*** require a lot of research on Baghdad and the war's impact on the city? "Needless to say, real animals can't talk—but beyond that, our graphic novel hopefully feels very true to life. I spoke with amazing people like *Mariette Hopley*, an I.F.A.W. 'rescue veterinarian' who spent time in Iraq after the war began, spent weeks reading about the region, studying the history of Iraq, learning everything I could about lions, gathering tons of photo reference, etc. But really, Niko did all of the heavy lifting."

And speaking of artist *Niko Henrichon*—how did Vaughan come to choose him to illustrate the graphic novel? "I actually pitched ***Pride*** to Vertigo *before* I'd found an artist. It was my ever-diligent Y editor *Will Dennis* who recommended Niko for the book. I was really impressed by his work on the graphic novel ***Barnum,*** but it was Niko's lavishly illustrated sample drawings of realistic-yet-expressive animals that convinced us he was the *only* artist for the job.

"Sometimes, painted covers can feel like a bait and switch when you eventually open up the book, but all 136 pages of our graphic novel are literally just as breathtaking as Niko's cover. He's a monster of art, along with being a fantastic guy. Niko's art is so amazing, I found myself cutting a great deal of it and just allowing his pictures to tell the story."

What was the biggest challenge the book presented? "In terms of challenges, I've been writing exclusively serialized monthly fiction for almost ten years, so the learning curve for writing a 136-page self-contained novel was steep, but I really wanted to challenge myself rather than rest on my laurels as 'cliffhanger guy.'

"The story of this pride seemed to dictate a standalone format. Our protagonists' lives were transformed in an instant, and Niko and I felt that readers should experience that emotional journey just as suddenly, should feel what it's like to have a world turned upside-down in one sitting."

And what were its most significant rewards? "Writing is always its own reward. I mean, I hope other people connect with the book, but I only ever write for myself. There's not a single 'moral' to the story that I'm hoping everyone will walk away with. As a matter of fact, I don't care what people think about our book, as long as they find themselves still thinking about it when it's done."

It's obvious that Vaughan is very proud of the book, which he describes as "the best thing I've ever written. It's completely different from anything I've ever worked on, but I couldn't be more thrilled with the results. No matter what other projects I write down the line, ***Pride of Baghdad*** will probably always be the work I'm most proud of."

Pride of Baghdad, an original 136-page hardcover graphic novel priced at $19.99, is scheduled for September 13th release from Vertigo.

by Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

Marvel Confirms Break in Civil War Supply Line

Wondering where that next issue of ***Civil War*** is? Well, it looks like you have a little bit of a wait before you get the next installment of the core series, as well as a few of the more closely-related tie-ins.

According to Marvel's *David Gabriel*, it became necessary to push back the dates on several books "to accommodate the creative team of *Mark Millar & Steve McNiven* and maintain the artistic integrity and high standards of the event..." Delayed titles include ***Civil War, Amazing Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, Punisher War Journal,*** and ***Civil War: Front Line.***

According to a posting by artist *Steve McNiven*, "The responsibility for the art delays lies with me, period. I've been working harder than I ever have, (and this is my third profession), but this is the hardest project I've ever done and... I had little lead time. It was as big a surprise to me as anyone else that Marvel changed its publishing schedule to allow Mark and I to finish the series together...

"Please realize that the art delays were never meant in a malicious way nor am I being a prima donna with my work. What I'm trying is to do service to the exceptional story that Mark has written. That's it, and is all that I focus on when I'm at the table. I let Marvel know exactly where I am on a daily basis, from day one, so that they can make the decisions like the one they have made. I'll continue to work hard to put out the rest of this series with the best work I can do in the time I have been given and I hope that you, the fans and retailers will stick with us, 'cause Mark has written a real gem here."

Additionally Marvel is adding some new books to the ***Civil War*** checklist, along with a new subheading, "Casualties of War," which will relate to the event in much the same way that "Road to ***Civil War***" did.

Here's the revised checklist of ***Civil War*** tie-ins and core titles broken down by month:

SEPTEMBER

Civil War #4
Civil War Files
Civil War Front Line #6
Civil War: X-Men #3
Civil War: Young Avengers & Runaways #3
Amazing Spider-Man #535
Cable & Deadpool #32
Captain America #22
Fantastic Four #540
Heroes for Hire #2
Ms. Marvel #7
New Avengers #24
Wolverine #46

OCTOBER

Civil War: Choosing Sides (one-shot—a new addition to the ***Civil War*** lineup)
Civil War Front Line #7
Civil War: X-Men #4
Civil War: Young Avengers & Runaways #4
Captain America #23
Heroes for Hire #3
Iron Man #13
Ms. Marvel #8
New Avengers #25
Wolverine #47

NOVEMBER

Civil War #5
Civil War Front Line #8
Amazing Spider-Man #536
Captain America #24
Fantastic Four #541
Iron Man #14
Moon Knight #7 (New addition to the list—a "Casualties Of War" title)
Punisher: War Journal #1
Wolverine #48

DECEMBER

Civil War #6
Civil War Front Line #9
Black Panther #23 (A new addition to the list)
Civil War: War Crimes (A new addition to the list)
Iron Man/Captain America Special ((New addition to the list—a "Casualties Of War" title)
Moon Knight #8 (New addition to the list—a "Casualties Of War" title)
Punisher: War Journal #2
Winter Soldier: Winter Kills ((New addition to the list—a "Casualties Of War" title)

JANUARY '07

Civil War #7
Amazing Spider-Man #537
Amazing Spider-Man #538
Black Panther #24 (New addition to the list)
Blade #5 (New addition to the list—a "Casualties Of War" title)
Civil War Front Line #10
Fantastic Four #542
Fantastic Four #543
Moon Knight #10 (New addition to the list—a "Casualties Of War" title)
Punisher: War Journal #3

FEBRUARY '07

Civil War Front Line #11 (New addition to the list)
Civil War: Battle Damage Report (New addition to the list)
Black Panther #25 (New addition to the list)

"At this point we do not anticipate further changes to the schedule," *David Gabriel* added. "We apologize for the inconvenience but feel that this is in the best interest of the quality of the event..."

Editor *Tom Brevoort* said that the delays will also push back the planned launches of several new post-***Civil War*** series, "but since those books haven't been solicited yet, there isn't the same kind of problem — we simply won't solicit them until such a time as the appropriate ***Civil War*** material they spin out of is ready to see print," Brevoort told ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Matt Brady*. "All of the stuff that falls into this category — ***Mighty Avengers, Thor*** and so forth — will not be solicited until after ***Civil War*** wraps up, so February or March. Dan Slott's ***Civil War*** spin-out, for example, looks like it'll be in March at this point."

Brevoort offered a few words regarding the new additions to the ***Civil War*** event. He described ***Civil War: War Crimes*** as "a one-shot that focuses on the criminal element, on the underworld of the Marvel Universe during ***Civil War***. We've heard from any number of readers asking how Civil War is affecting some of the major villains in the Marvel Universe, so we're going to answer some of that here.

"The principal character will be the Kingpin who, though still behind bars, continues to have his fingers in all sorts of unlawful pies. And like Lucky Luciano in World War II, who was offered leniency on his sentence in exchange for using his influence to help the government police the shores of U-Boat troops who'd do deals with local mobsters in exchange for food and supplies, the Kingpin will be offered the opportunity to either help the Pro-Registration side, or to hinder them."

What about ***Captain America: Winter Soldier Special?*** "Coming directly out of the Winter Soldier's appearances in ***Captain America #23 & #24,*** this'll follow Bucky Barnes through the landscape of Civil War, in which he'll encounter old friends and new foes alike. It'll also put him in position for the next major story arc in Captain America, 'Death of the Dream.' *Ed Brubaker* will be writing this one."

The ***Iron Man/Captain America Special*** "will chronicle the last face-to-face meeting between Iron Man and Captain America before the climax to ***Civil War***, one last attempt on both their parts to reconcile their points of view and individual actions with one another, and possibly avert a catastrophe," Brevoort said. "It'll also serve as a summation of their friendship over the years. Readers have been saying that they don't quite understand why Tony Stark is doing what he's doing, and this special (along with ***Iron Man #13 & 14***) will give them greater insight.

As to how ***Moon Knight*** and ***Blade*** fit into the event, "Both Moon Knight and Blade will be having adventures that are reflective of the ***Civil War*** landscape without being super-crucial to the core story of

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Civil War. In both cases, when we were conceiving ***Civil War***, these books were deemed too new to derail by trying to incorporate them into the larger storyline. But now that we have more time, we have the opportunity to involve them like any other tie-in book. So you'll see what happens when Moon Knight is asked to register, and you'll see what Blade is doing while the ***Civil War*** is raging through the streets."

And Brevoort assures readers that, in spite of the delay, ***Civil War #4*** is most definitely a book worth the wait, since it "contains a death (with a big ol' hole blown through somebody's chest), a funeral, a fateful decision, and a team reborn. It's also got Thor, obviously, and the lowdown on why he seems to be doing what he seems to be doing at the end of ***Civil War #3***. And the rest of the big throwdown that started in issue #3. It's *definitely* going to have people talking when it finally, finally, finally hits the stands..."

Watching the Detective

For years, writers have focused on Batman as a sort of avatar of vengeance, a grim, determined, driven hero. That's pre-***Crisis***, though; the post-***Crisis*** Batman is more balanced, more satisfied, more human... and once again, he's living up to his reputation as the world's greatest detective in the pages of—appropriately enough—***Detective Comics.***

And we can thank *Paul Dini* for that.

Dini, who defined Batman for a generation of animated viewers, has been guiding Batman's adventures in ***Detective*** for the past couple of months—and he's making sure that the book lives up to its title by presenting a series of single-issue stories that demonstrate the Dark Knight Detective's skills at crime-solving. Not since the early days of *Julius Schwartz's* editorial tenure have readers seen such a master of observation and deduction... and it's good to have him back!

What led Dini to focus on single-issue mystery tales in a field dominated by the trade-paperback-focused story arc? "Mostly, I wanted to read single issue Batman stories again even if that meant I had to write them," Dini said. "There have been a lot of great serialized Batman stories published over the years, but I have a lot of fondness for the golden and silver age stories that gave you a great adventure all contained in one issue. That's where the richness of Batman's world came from, and I wanted to do stories that will hopefully pump a little new mythology into the character's on-going legend."

Dini has plenty of experience with Batman from his animation days, but Dini sees a difference between writing ***Detective Comics*** and working on an animated episode. "My take is similar to the animated series, but it's not identical. As there was a loose continuity to the animated series, there is also an overall continuity to this particular iteration of the Batman world, though the stories are pretty much stand alone adventures with slight carry-over elements. For instance, now that I've established the Riddler as a detective, you may see references to him in other issues, though those particular stories may not necessarily be about the Riddler. Once a plot or character element becomes part of that world, it's out there for me to use in other issues, or not, as the case may be.

"From a tonal point of view, I'm trying to set the stories against more diverse backgrounds than we could use in the animated series. I could never do an episode about solving a premeditated murder for instance, because death was usually a pretty taboo subject for kid's TV. Likewise I doubt I could set a scene inside a hardcore fetish club or an apartment where a snuff film is being made. I wanted the option of making Gotham a city where anything goes and I've been able to do that in print the way I never could in the animated series."

Dini returned to Batman's detective role not only because the book is called ***Detective Comics***, but also because "it's a big part of who Batman *is*. It shows his intelligence, both in the suit and out of it as Bruce. Because Bruce Wayne, as he is seen by the world, is such a great natural disguise, I wanted to have him do more of the actual sleuthing with Batman coming in as needed to capture the villain or otherwise settle a larger than life problem.

"Batman, and by extension Bruce, are always 'on' when they are in given situations. When he's at a party or board meeting, I think Bruce is always studying everyone around him. Not so much that he thinks everyone is guilty of some crime—it's that he's trained himself to notice quirks and nuances that other people aren't even aware that they have. It may be something as casual as the way a girl flips her hair or a man's habit of coughing before he speaks. He's trained himself to notice things like that and he can't really turn it off. It comes in handy when he has to call to mind certain details about people he's met.

"It works even better when he's Batman and he has to fight an enemy he's faced before. He can remember details of Ras Al Ghul's sword techniques or that Two-Face is a better shot with his right hand than his left, and plan his defense accordingly. Like a lot of detectives, I think Batman is able to almost determine at a glance how a crime was done—but the real work comes when he has to confirm his suspicions."

Dini enjoys the challenge of creating a mystery suitable for Batman's skills. "Writing a mystery story is always a challenge for me, because you have to play fair and put all the clues on the table before Batman can catch the criminal. In some cases he may make a logical jump that happens off-panel, but the clues will be there to show how he put it all together."

Over the years leading up to ***Infinite Crisis***, readers had all but forgotten who Bruce Wayne was—but now, thanks to Dini and *Grant Morrison*, who is playing up Bruce Wayne in the current ***Batman*** story arc, the Dark Knight Detective's "normal" persona is once again in the spotlight. As Dini sees it, both identities are a part of Batman's psyche, but each masks something of the character's essence. "When he's Bruce and out of the mask, he is a darker, more disciplined, much more aloof version of the playboy businessman he pretends to be, and I think that's closest to who he is. I think of Batman almost as a role he plays, like when a soldier gets suited up for battle. Yet Batman needs to be Bruce because without a release, he would go mad."

Dini has more Bruce Wayne-focused stories in the works—and he'll be joined by a prominent guest star. "We have another Bruce on the town story coming up in a month or two. The Penguin reopens his Iceberg Lounge and while Batman declines an invitation, Bruce Wayne is more than happy to accept and check things out. Although Bruce brings one of his casual dates to the event, he winds up spending most of the evening with Lois Lane, who is there reporting for ***The Daily Planet***. It's fun to bring in other characters who know Bruce is Batman and have them play Watson to his Holmes.

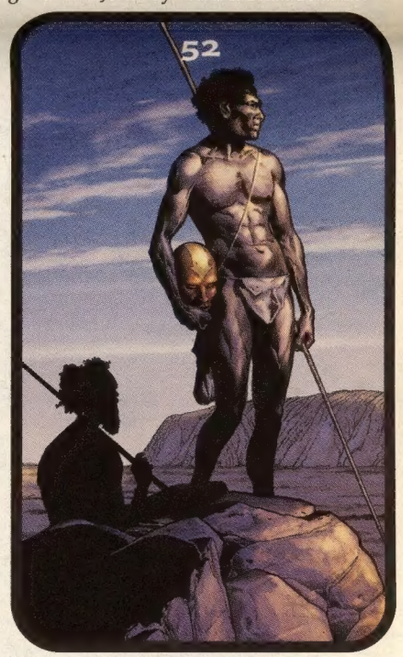
"Zatanna also shows up in that story as she has a particular insight to a card player who figures prominently in the action. It's a story with a lot of things going on and a lot of character interplay. Basically I wanted to see how much I could cram into 22 pages and still have it make sense."

The Riddler... the Penguin... any other villains that Dini's itching to write? "Well, when you mention itching, you have to mention Poison Ivy. She's in the next issue. Harley does have a brief cameo, though she got a little more play than I intended. Originally she was just in her cell as Ivy ran down the asylum hall, but artist *Joe Benitez* gave Harley a funny one-panel close-up so I wound up giving her some dialogue. The story is all Ivy's, though. It's what happens when the plant world turns on her and tries to kill her. Batman has to uncover how and why that happened, and he doesn't like what he learns. As for a more extended Harley appearance in the future, I wouldn't rule it out."

Detective #823, featuring Poison Ivy, is slated for early September release.

Coming Comics—DC in November

52 continues with more revelations about LexCorp, a disturbing appearance by Jean Loring, some surprises regarding Red Tornado, ominous accusations about Supergirl, and more revelations about Batwoman, all brought to you by the superstar team of *Geoff Johns, Grant Morrison, Greg Rucka, Mark Waid, & Keith Giffen*, accompanied by a small army of art talents. In addition, ***Week 26*** features the origin of Hawkman by *Mark Waid & Joe Bennett*; ***Week 27***, the origin of Power Girl by Waid & *Adam Hughes*; ***Week 28***, the origin of Catman by Waid & *Dale Eaglesham, and* ***Week 29***, the origin of The Joker by Waid & *Brian Bolland*.



The Atom is forced to leave Ivy Town unprotected to strike at the sub-atomic Waiting homeworld…only to be stopped by the vicious and villainous Dwarfstar! Worst of all, Dwarfstar reveals that both of them are wearing belts that are ticking time bombs... Is the Atom about to be split asunder? Find out in ***The All-New Atom #5*** by *Gail Simone, Eddy Barrows, & Trevor Scott.*

The long-overdue ***All Star Batman & Robin, The Boy Wonder #5*** by *Frank Miller & Jim Lee* is pushed back to November release.

Continued on page 6

- ☐ CIVIL WAR: X-MEN #3
- ☐ CIVIL WAR: YOUNG AVENGERS & RUNAWAYS #3
- ☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #535
- ☐ CABLE & DEADPOOL #32
- ☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #22
- ☐ FANTASTIC FOUR #540
- ☐ HEROES FOR HIRE #2
- ☐ MS. MARVEL #7
- ☐ NEW AVENGERS #24
- ☐ WOLVERINE #46

OCTOBER

- ☐ CIVIL WAR: CHOOSING SIDES (One Shot)
- ☐ CIVIL WAR FRONT LINE #7
- ☐ CIVIL WAR: X-MEN #4
- ☐ CIVIL WAR: YOUNG AVENGERS & RUNAWAYS #4
- ☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #23
- ☐ HEROES FOR HIRE #3
- ☐ IRON MAN #13
- ☐ MS. MARVEL #8
- ☐ NEW AVENGERS #25
- ☐ WOLVERINE #47
- ☐ CAPTAIN AMERICA #24
- ☐ FANTASTIC FOUR #541
- ☐ IRON MAN #14
- ☐ MOON KNIGHT #7 (Casualties of War)
- ☐ PUNISHER: WAR JOURNAL #1
- ☐ WOLVERINE #48

DECEMBER

- ☐ **CIVIL WAR #6**
- ☐ CIVIL WAR FRONT LINE #9
- ☐ BLACK PANTHER #23
- ☐ CIVIL WAR: WAR CRIMES (One Shot)
- ☐ IRON MAN/CAPTAIN AMERICA SPECIAL (Casualties of War)
- ☐ MOON KNIGHT #8 (Casualties of War)
- ☐ PUNISHER: WAR JOURNAL #2
- ☐ WINTER SOLDIER: WINTER KILLS (Casualties of War)
- ☐ BLACK PANTHER #24
- ☐ BLADE #5 (Casualties of War)
- ☐ CIVIL WAR FRONT LINE #10
- ☐ FANTASTIC FOUR #542
- ☐ FANTASTIC FOUR #543
- ☐ MOON KNIGHT #9 (Casualties of War)
- ☐ PUNISHER: WAR JOURNAL #3

FEBRUARY

- ☐ CIVIL WAR FRONT LINE #11
- ☐ CIVIL WAR: BATTLE DAMAGE REPORT
- ☐ BLACK PANTHER #25

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CIVIL WAR

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ CIVIL WAR #4
- ☐ CIVIL WAR FILES
- ☐ CIVIL WAR FRONT LINE #6

NOVEMBER

- ☐ CIVIL WAR #5
- ☐ CIVIL WAR FRONT LINE #8
- ☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #536

JANUARY

- ☐ CIVIL WAR #7
- ☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #537
- ☐ AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #538

Bizarro returns in ***Action Comics #845*** by *Geoff Johns, Richard Donner, & Adam Kubert,* but that's not the foremost matter on Superman's mind as he and Lois have to make one of the most heartbreaking decision of their lives. Plus, what does Lex Luthor have to do with all of this?

Thought you had seen the last of the Joker for a while in ***Batman #655?*** Think again! The Clown Prince of Crime makes his return in *Grant Morrison & Andy Kubert's* ***Batman #659***—and he's determined to get revenge on Batman! And as citizens of Gotham City will soon discover, the Joker's reappearance is no laughing matter.

Two of comics' most iconic figures come together in ***Batman/The Spirit,*** a oneshot by *Jeph Loeb, Darwyn Cooke, & J. Bone* that paves the way for the upcoming ***Spirit*** series. When the American Criminologist Association holds its annual convention, its members are unaware that America's criminals are holding a gathering of their own. And when Batman's rogue gallery joins forces with the Spirit's colorful criminals, things can only get worse! With dozens of villains on the loose and the nation's security at stake, two very different crimefighters must come together to save the day. This tale features just about everyone from both supporting casts, including Robin, Catwoman, the Joker, Ebony, P'Gell, Commissioner Dolan and more.

Adam Beechen, Steve Scott, & Nathan Massengill present an offbeat standalone adventure in ***Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #212.*** Where can a young man take a hot date that isn't clichéd? How about a crime scene on the rooftops of Gotham, to witness a Batman sighting?

Birds of Prey reaches the hundredth-issue milestone this month—and that means that it's time to bring in new blood! Who will be asked to join Oracle in her all-new Birds Of Prey? Who will refuse, and who will fly the coop for good? *Gail Simone, Nicola Scott, & Doug Hazlewood* share the answers in ***Birds of Prey #100.*** This issue also includes a back-up story following Black Canary and her new role in the DCU!

Batman guest stars in ***Creeper #4*** by *Steve Niles, Justiniano, & Waldon Wong.* The fun begins when the Creeper investigates an abandoned, Alcatraz-like prison called the Gotham Tombs.

On the fringes of the Rann-Thanagar War, G'Nort of the Green Lantern Corps must find an arbiter to broker a peace deal! What neutral part does he find? None other than Guy Gardner! Do you foresee problems?... You're right—and they begin in ***Guy Gardner: Collateral Damage #1,*** written and illustrated by *Howard Chaykin.*

Oliver Queen's son returns to action in ***Connor Hawke: Dragon's Blood,*** a six-part miniseries by *Chuck Dixon & Derec Donovan.* An archery contest beckons Connor Hawke to the far end of the globe. Accompanied by his old pal Eddie Fyers, Connor accepts the invitation. But a much darker game is afoot...

Scott Beatty, Rags Morales, & Michael Bair kick off the two-part "Skin Game" in ***JSA Classified #19.*** The stolen body-part market is booming in the metahuman world, as a series of mysterious "thefts" involving the enhanced working "parts" of various metahumans draws the interest of Dr. Mid-Nite himself!

Brad Meltzer & Ed Benes continue their best-selling saga of the "Tornado's Path" as the true mastermind behind the latest threat to the League is finally revealed in ***Justice League of America #4.*** And an old friend reappears...

In ***Secret Six #6,*** the Six take on Vandal Savage in his mountain lair—and not all will live to tell the tale! See who comes to an untimely demise in this series finale by *Gail Simone, Brad Walker, & Jimmy Palmiotti.*

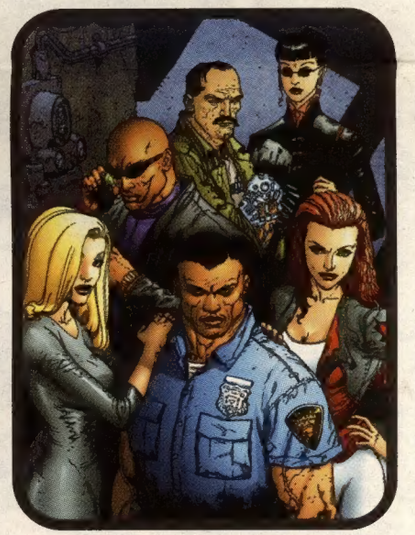
It's Supergirl vs. the League of Assassins and Batgirl in ***Supergirl #12*** by *Joe Kelly, Ian Churchill, & Norm Rapmund.* Cassandra Cain has something that creates a weakness in Kara — but what is it?

In *Mark Verheiden & Ethan Van Sciver's* ***Superman/Batman #31,*** Lex Luthor enlists Batman to raid Superman's Fortress of Solitude in the hope of stopping the alien madness that has gripped all the outworlder heroes—but to complete the mission, he must evade a Titan and get help from an unlikely Justice Leaguer!

In November, DC adds a new ongoing title to the Superman family with the introduction of ***Superman Confidential.*** This series, which focuses on key moments in the history of Superman, begins with a six-part arc by *Darwyn Cooke & Tim Sale* that explores the mystery and menace of Kryptonite as Superman experiences his first exposure to the radioactive remnants of his home planet.

DC collected editions include:

- ***The Blue Beetle: Shellshocked,*** collecting the first six issues of the series;
- ***Green Lantern Archives Volume 6,*** a hardcover compilation of the Silver Age ***Green Lantern #s 39-47*** by *Gardner Fox, John Broome, Gil Kane, & Sid Greene;*
- ***Huntress: Dark Knight Daughter,*** collecting the first appearances of the daughter of the Earth-Two Batman and Catwoman by *Paul Levitz, Joe Staton, Steve Mitchell, Bob Layton, Bruce Patterson,* and other, originally presented in ***DC Super Stars #17, Batman Family #s 18-20,*** and ***Wonder Woman #s 271-287, 289-290, & 294-295;***
- ***New Teen Titans: Terra Incognito,*** reprinting ***New Teen Titans #s 28-34 & New Teen Titans Annual #2*** by *Marv Wolfman, George Pérez, & Romeo Tanghal;*
- ***Sachs & Violens,*** collecting the Epic miniseries by *Peter David & George Pérez;*
- ***Showcase Presents Shazam! Volume One,*** collecting al the new stories from ***Shazam! #s 1-35;***
- ***Superman: For Tomorrow Volume 2,*** a softcover edition of the second collection of *Brian Azzarello, Jim Lee, & Scott Williams'* 12-part arc;
- ***Superman: The Greatest Stories Ever Told Volume 2,*** collecting classic tales by *Jerry Siegel, John Byrne, Greg Rucka, Curt Swan, Frank Miller, Matthew Clarke,* and others; and
- ***Will Eisner's Spirit Archives Volume 20,*** a hardcover compilation of Eisner's ***Spirit*** sections from January 1st to July 2nd, 1950.



Coming Comics—WildStorm/DC in November

Christos Gage & Doug Mahnke introduce a new version of a classic WildStorm team in ***StormWatch PhD.*** Originally a U.N. crisis intervention force with a global reach, StormWatch suffered a very visible and crippling blow following a catastrophe in New York City. With their limitations now exposed, facing budget cuts and internal gutting, former Weatherman Jackson King is tasked with a near-impossible mission: develop new methods of superpowered-being apprehension and containment on a shoestring budget. Gone are the fancy orbital satellites and matter-teleportation services, traded for a dingy office staffed

with second-rate heroes and former villains to combat the growing crisis of post-human threats. Does humanity — and this Post Human Division — stand a chance?

Danny Bilson, Paul DeMeo, Adam Brody, Jerry Ordway, & Al Vey present the story of a blacklisted 1950s superhero accused by Joseph McCarthy's HUAC of working against his own nation in ***Red Menace,*** a limited series that pits patriotism and politics, powers and pragmatism in a powerful superhero drama influenced by real-world events.

From the pages of ***The Authority*** comes ***Midnighter,*** a new series by *Garth Ennis, Chris Sprouse, & Karl Story.* Returning from a mission in Afghanistan, The Midnighter is accosted as he enters the Carrier. Something is terribly wrong; these unseen assailants take him down too easily and then drag him though the teleportation door to an unknown location. After regaining consciousness he is given a cryptic choice: either kill a mass murderer or die!

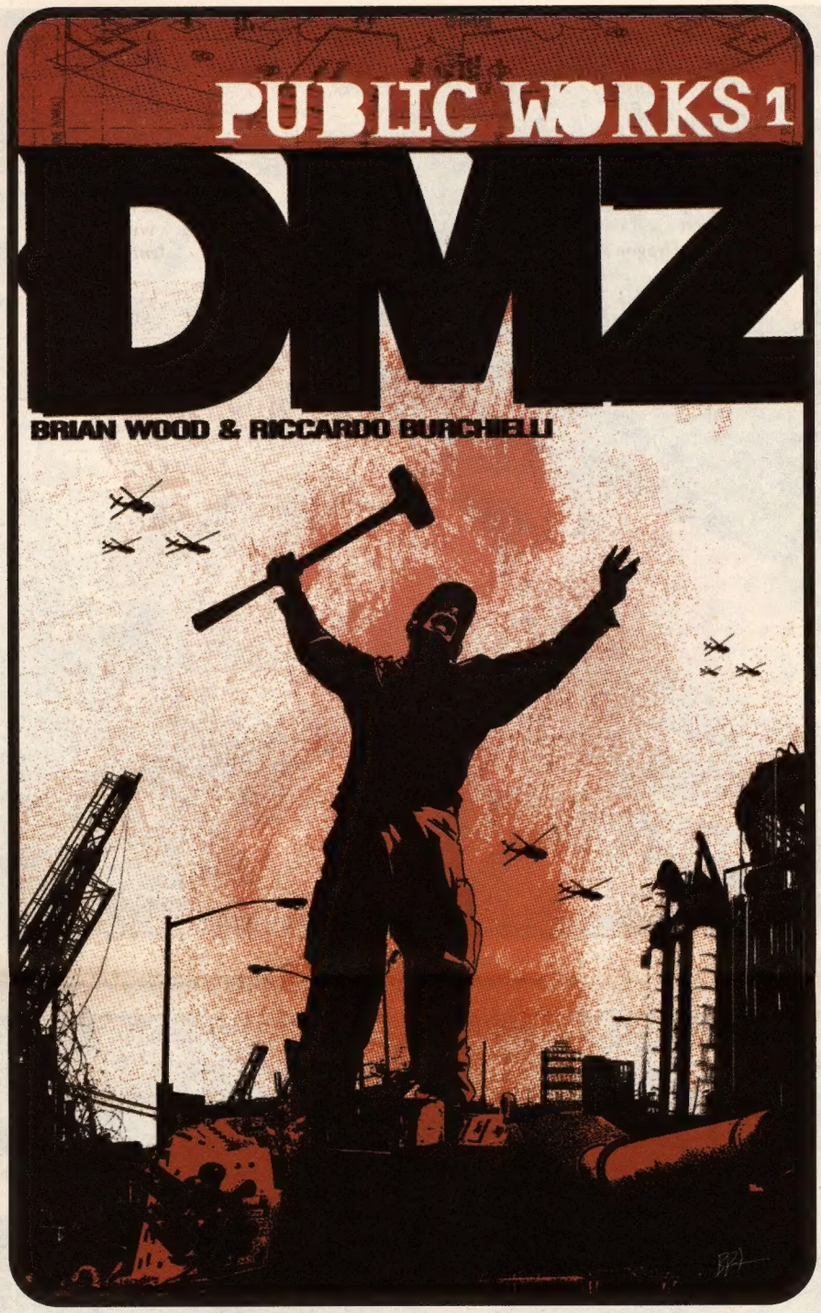
Dan Abnett, Andy Lanning, & Wesley Craig do a little cutting up in ***Texas Chainsaw Massacre,*** a horrifying new series that explores the disturbing mystery of Travis County's Hewitt Family. You've seen the films—now see the concept given the first-class comics treatment that it deserves.

WildStorm collected editions for November include:

- ***Albion,*** collecting the limited series by *Alan Moore, Leah Moore, John Reppion, Shane Oakley, & George Freeman;* and
- ***Wraithborn,*** collecting the six-issue limited series by *Marcia Chen, Joe Benitez, Joe Weems, & Victor Llamas.*

Coming Comics—Vertigo in November

Mike Carey, Jim Fern, & Rob Hunter venture into the realm of horror in ***Crossing Midnight,*** a new ongoing series set in modern-day Japan, where Kai and his twin sister Toshi are born on opposite sides of midnight. But that casual line in time will have disastrous effects on their lives: Their friends will go missing; commonplace knives will hide deadly secrets; and Kai and Toshi will have to save themselves and their entire family from their own horrible destinies. This series taps into Japanese and Korean horror to mix the mythology of ***The Sandman*** with the fantasy of films like



Hayao Miyazaki's ***Princess Mononoke*** and ***Spirited Away.***

Artist *Riccardo Burchielli* rejoins *Brian Wood* for the five-part "Public Works," kicking off in ***DMZ #13.*** Now that he's a free agent after severing his contract with Liberty News, Matty goes undercover as a day laborer on various construction sites around the city. And it doesn't take long before he stumbles on some shady business with Trustwell, Inc., the corporation behind most of the reconstruction.

Vertigo collected editions include:

- ***100 Bullets Volume 10: Decayed,*** collecting ***100 Bullets #s 68-75;***
- ***Fables Volume 8: Wolves,*** collecting ***Fables #s 48-51,*** supplemented with *Bill Willingham's* complete script for the double-sized #50; and
- ***Neil Gaiman & Charles Vess's Stardust,*** an oversized hardcover edition of the fantasy classic by the creator of the ***Sandman*** and one of the field's most talented fantasy artists—a classic that's soon to be a major motion picture.

Coming in April '07 from DC Direct

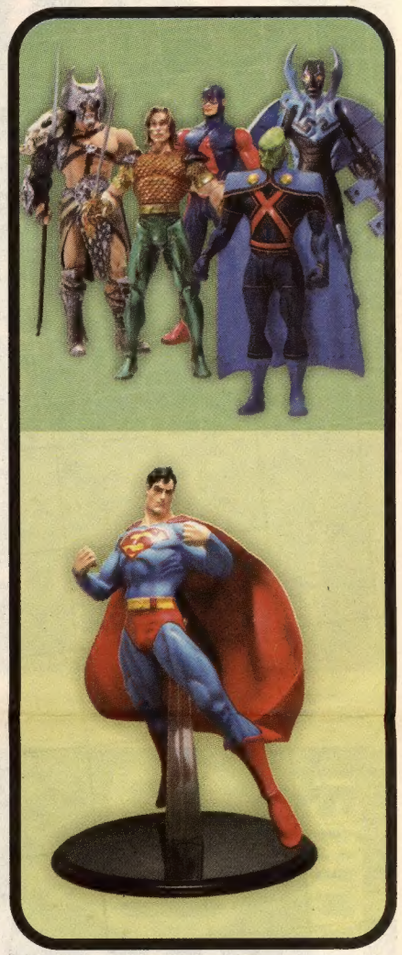
2007 brings the first DC Direct Wonder Woman collectible featuring the likeness of the actress who portrayed her on television. ***The Wonder Woman Lynda Carter Statue,*** a 13" tall cold-cast porcelain statue, captures the look of *Lynda Carter's* Amazing Amazon.

Superman/Batman Series 4: With a Vengeance offers six action figures inspired by the art of *Ed McGuinness*: ***Batzarro, Bizarro, Superwoman, Batwoman, Batman Beyond,*** and ***Kryptonite Batman.***

Revisit the debut of five different heroes with ***First Appearance Series 4,*** a set of six new action figures (yeah, we can do math—but as you'll see in a sec, there are *two* versions of one of the heroes). The set includes ***Warlord, Martian Manhunter, Atom, Aquaman, Blue Beetle,*** and ***Blue Beetle (Stealth Variant)*** (see, we told ya!...).

The art of *Matt Wagner* is the inspiration for the latest ***Batman Black & White Statue,*** sculpted by *Paul Harding.*

Once again, DC is teaming up with Kotobukiya to present an affordable vinyl statue of one of its landmark heroes—and this time, it's the Man of Steel who is destined to become the Man of Vinyl! ***The Superman Vinyl Statue*** stands approximately 14" high and is limited to only 3000 pieces. (And you won't have to wait 'til 2007 for this one—look for this vinyl statue in late October.)



Ins & Outs

In: Best-selling mystery writer *Ian Rankin,* who is in discussions with DC regarding an as-yet-unnamed project. As soon as the deal is closed, you'll hear more about it in ***CSN!***

Out: ***Elephantmen #1*** by *Richard Starkings & Moritat,* which has sold out of its 16,000 copy first printing. Starkings reports that a second printing is already in the works.

In: Free Comic Book Day 2007, which has been set for Saturday, May 5th. This is the traditional first Saturday and May on which FCBD has been observed for the past couple of years—however, this year it will also tie in with a major comic book film release, since that's opening weekend for ***Spider-Man 3,*** *Sam Raimi's* latest film starring *Tobey Maguire & Kirsten Dunst.*

Out: ***ABC A-Z,*** which has been cancelled after four volumes.

In: A new line of graphic novels from Zondervan, which will be published under its Zonderkidz imprint beginning in August of 2007. They'll premiere the line with twelve graphic novels in the first month—two each of six different series, all presented in a manga format. Among the offerings will be a manga-style presentation of the Bible.

HEAVEN HATH NO FURY LIKE THE SPECTRE!

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